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NEWS RELEASE

(for immediate release)

If you're giving upgrading courses for a crew of heavy duty mechanics, it may be more productive in some cases to take the course to their shop rather than bring the students to the College campus---even if the shop is a mile below ground.

Cariboo College has just tried this new approach. And it has worked so well that the College expects to team up regularly with industry and the British Columbia Ministry of Labour on upgrading courses out in the field as well as in College facilities, particularly where specialized equipment is involved.

Cariboo's Department of Mechanics recently concluded (early December) two such courses in an improvised classroom adjacent to the deep-down repair and maintenance area at the Craigmont mine, located near Merritt in south central British Columbia. One course concentrated on hydraulics and transmissions, the other on electrical systems.

Mechanics Instructor Ron Bonnough and the two 15-man classes moved freely between the classroom (a former storage hole) and the repair shop next door as the trainees applied the theory they were absorbing. Nearly 90 percent of Craigmont's equipment is serviced and repaired underground.

The results: not only an average improvement of 40 percent in knowledge and performance as measured by post-testing in comparison with pre-testing, but also a happy mining company. Bonnough has since been notified by company officials that substantial savings have already become evident in repair and maintenance costs on their arsenal of heavy equipment.

(more)

"It was a 'first' in more ways than one," says Cariboo Mechanics Chairperson Ben Eldridge. "For one thing, you don't have a printed manual for a lot of the equipment, because the mine mechanics have put together specialized machinery to suit the needs of the job. The first thing we had to do was to study the six different types of hybrid equipment unique to Craigmont's operation, then design the course to fit it."

Eldridge arranged the subterranean course with enthusiastic support from the Ministry of Labour, which regularly sponsors upgrading courses for mechanics and other tradesmen.

"This was the first time the Ministry has sponsored a group upgrading course out in the field rather than bring individual mechanics to the College," he adds. "With this success story on the record, I don't think it will be the last. We're looking at mobile courses for the logging industry, for example, right now."

Cariboo's Mechanics Department has been conducting pre-apprentice training for heavy duty mechanics and automotive repairmen since 1971. Additional programs now in effect include nine-month pre-employment courses in General Mechanics and for Advanced Diesel and Gas Technicians, plus five-month courses of study for small-engine repair trainees and for partspersons.

Last fall the College contracted with the provincial Department of Highways for the first set of upgrading courses, this time on high-energy ignition systems. These differed from the Craigmont Mine arrangement, however, in that the Highways employees came to the Kamloops campus for their classroom and shop work.

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